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Commerce of Rhode Island, 1726-1800. Volume II., 1775-1800.

[Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, seventh series, vol. X.] (Boston: The Society. 1915. Pp. xi, 501.)

THE general character of this collection and the uses to which it may be put have already been sufficiently indicated.¹ While the first volume offers a rich store of illustrative material on a number of well-known facts concerning colonial trade, the second supplies equally valuable detail regarding the birth of an independent American commercial system. Of the four hundred letters and other documents here presented, more than one-third picture attempts to carry on trade during the Revolution, a much greater number the triumphal emergence of American commerce from the restrictions formerly laid by the navigation acts, and a few the combined advantages and disabilities imposed upon the new system by the European wars commencing in 1792. Thus for the revolutionary period we have actual pictures of the difficulties encountered in domestic trade from the absence of transportation facilities on land, the presence of British vessels off the coast, the lack of a banking system and the depreciation of the Continental currency; as well as of the determined efforts through which, in spite of all, the trade was steadily carried on. The temptation to exaggerate the extent and severity of the economic distress arising from the war is corrected by records of traffic in such goods as velvets, broadcloths, and wines. In the matter of overseas commerce, we may watch the placing of "rebel" vessels under Canadian or neutral registers, the operation of "flags of truce", and the continuation of trade with England through Amsterdam, or with Europe generally through St. Eustatius and other foreign West India islands. Through letters covering the ten years of peace the reader may go with Christopher Champlin's ships to Bordeaux and L'Orient, Dublin and Cork, Amsterdam and Hamburg, Gothenburg and Copenhagen, Cronstadt and St. Petersburg, and may watch the exchange of their cargoes of lumber, fish, oil, furs, tobacco, rice, naval stores, and farm products for a still more varied assortment of articles. He may even share the pleasure of their captains in remembering that these articles had hitherto, for the most part, been obtainable only through British ports. He may see France and Ireland, the latter also enjoying new-found liberties, making every effort to capture American trade, and may learn afresh how greatly handicapped were American merchants by the inability of the states as a whole to conclude commercial treaties. In the remaining group of letters, covering the last eight years of the century, he will find examples of British interference with legitimate American trade and the temporary opening, under stress of war, of the British West India ports. But through all of this it is the facts dealing with the actual mechanism of commerce which are most worth while. The varieties and fluctuations of the currency sys-

¹ A review of the first volume by the late Professor G. S. Callender appeared in the *Review*, XX. 857 (July, 1915).

tems, the negotiation of French government paper or even of ordinary bills of exchange, the development of marine insurance, the regulation of prices and freight charges—on such matters as these the book contributes facts which are actually new. In conclusion it must be noted that it is not solely the commercial side of history upon which these letters touch. Many a glimpse is offered of conditions during revolutionary times at Boston, Philadelphia, and Newport, of the suffering and migration of people of Rhode Island, of the efforts of Congress to stop the supply of British ships and the exploits of privateers. Indeed such information ranges from a description of life at Harvard in 1784 to accounts of the slave insurrections at Santo Domingo in 1791-1793. In the way of critical comment it is necessary only to say that the work of selecting and of editing is admirable throughout and that the index, while not above suspicion as regards either comprehensiveness or accuracy, is very serviceable.

HERBERT C. BELL.

The Critical Period, 1763-1765. Edited with Introduction and Notes by CLARENCE WALWORTH ALVORD, University of Illinois, and CLARENCE EDWIN CARTER, Miami University. [Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, vol. X., British Series, vol. I.] (Springfield, Ill.: Illinois State Historical Library. 1915. Pp. lvii, 597.)

THE state of Illinois is very fortunate in having the sources of its early history made accessible in collections such as this. Three volumes of documents of great interest relating to the time of the Virginian domination have been published, and this is the first of a projected series of five or six volumes covering the British period. This one, being a preliminary volume, contains two valuable introductory essays, one entitled "British Illinois, 1763-1768", and the other "The British Occupation of the Illinois Country, 1763-1765". The first essay shows that British Illinois was a matter of discussion rather than of realization; and the second is a summary of events leading up to the possession of the country by the British.

The documents included in the book are, in the main, devoted to three general subjects: description of the country and its inhabitants, French and Indian; the plans of the British for the exploitation of their newly acquired territory; and their efforts to obtain possession of it.

The reprint of the *Bannissement des Jésuites de la Louisiane*, attributed to Père Watrin, and first printed by Carayon, forms one of the most notable chapters in the volume. Though in the nature of special pleading, it is well written and throws much light on the history of the country, the methods of life of the people and of travel on the Mississippi. The letters of Sir William Johnson and of George